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ON PAGE 1-A

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Attacks in Europe seem coordinated

This is the first of four reports about mounting terrorism in Europe and the Middle East.

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PARIS — A French general and a West German industrialist are shot dead outside their homes. Mortar shells explode amidst Western warships in Lisbon harbor. In an Athens bar, a bomb injures 69 U.S. servicemen.

"Euroterrorism" — a new word in the "Euro-vocabulary" — has gained currency, leaving a trail of blood and warnings across Western Europe. The targets were selected carefully. Almost all were connected with the West's arms industry and with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The attacks appeared to have been coordinated, often involving more than one terrorist organization. Unlike the frequently amateur bungling of the 1970s, they were carried out with a cool, almost detached, professionalism.

The subsequent telephone calls and the often conflicting claims were part of the strategy to confuse the "enemy" — which happens to be the Western political system.

Although the initial wave of attacks in late January and early February subsided, the "red alert" continues — in Paris, Rome, London, Brussels, Bonn and other capitals.

Formerly reluctant to act in unison, or simply incapable of it in many cases, the Europeans are now pulling together to combat Euroterrorism.

"It is more dangerous because of its selectivity," an Italian expert said.

"Fight it as if you were fighting a dirty war," according to instruction issued by the French Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur — DGSE (General Directorate for External Security).

Fear of Euroterrorism has spread across the Atlantic. In Washington, Reagan administration officials are said to be concerned about the nobility of the various terrorist

SYNDICATED TERROR

organizations and the relatively low level of international cooperation, at least in the early stages of responses to attacks.

Recently, however, cooperation among the nations concerned has grown considerably. For example, France and West Germany have decided to institutionalize information sharing. France has also assured Italy that it will not be so generous in granting political asylum to terrorist suspects on the run — provided there is adequate proof of their guilt.

The French no longer underrate Italian intelligence on fugitive terrorists. For example, acting on information received from Rome last Feb. 19, Paris police arrested Sergio Tornaghi, condemned to life imprisonment by an Italian court for his role in the notorious Red Brigades.

Across Western Europe, giant headlines speak of the new groups that have signed their names in blood. There is the Red Army Faction in West Germany, which recently united with Action Directe (Direct Action) of France.

The Red Brigades, which acquired a sinister reputation during Italy's "reign of terror" in the 1970s, are back in the news. A dozen or so other leftist organizations have been identified.

Do they have a joint command? Are they inspired by the local communist parties? Are they infiltrated or manipulated by Soviet or any other East European intelligence services?

Teams of experts are trying to unravel this deadly puzzle. The stakes are exceptionally high: the survival of Western democracies and NATO's ability to function.

The experts' findings are by no means conclusive, but they stress three points:

- There has been a dramatic ideological and military radicalization of several key extremist left-wing

groups. While still using hysterical anti-Western slogans, their performance has been far from hysterical, showing a high degree of almost military coordination.

- The targets invariably have been connected with NATO or the Western arms industry. Thus, Gen. Rene Audran, assassinated last Jan. 25, dealt with French arms sales abroad. Ernst Zimmerman, who was killed five days later outside his Munich home, was a leading West German arms manufacturer.

- While not diminishing the threat posed by terrorists, experts caution against exaggerating their impact. The terrorist slayings have not impaired the West's ability to defend itself, they say, and the number of terrorists is smaller than during the 1960s and '70s.

Still, the number of terrorists appears to be less important than their accuracy and coordination.

In short, the disparate bands scattered through Western Europe have been replaced by a better organized and obviously better trained "European brotherhood of terror."

The most significant development in the murky world of European urban terrorism was the apparent linking of two major organizations: Germany's Red Army Faction and France's Direct Action. This took place Jan. 15.

Significantly, both groups are said to have been involved in the killing of Gen. Audran outside his home in suburban La Celle St. Cloud outside Paris only 10 days after the reported alliance between the two groups.

Experts divide the known terrorist organizations into three distinct groups, each using different methods and claiming different ideologies.

The first, and oldest, are "traditional" independence movements with strong regional bases. They include the Irish Republican Army, the Basque separatists in Spain and southern France, Corsican nationalists, whose favorite weapon is the plastic explosive, and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia. The Armenians have found Western Europe a convenient arena for attacks against Turks. They seek not only a separate Armenia, but revenge on Turkey for alleged massacres of Armenians in the 1920s.

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